

# The Return of Sherlock Holmes

By A. CONAN DOYLE,

Author of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "The Hound of the Baskervilles," "The Sign of the Four," "A Study in Scarlet," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY F. D. STEELE



(Continued From Page Nine.)

I examined the contents of the safe, most of which had been taken out and left on the table. The papers had been made up into sealed envelopes, one or two of which had been opened by the police. They were not, so far as I could judge, of any great value, nor did the bank book show that Mr. Oldacre was in such very affluent circumstances. But it seemed to me that all the papers were not there. There were allusions to some deeds—possibly the more valuable—which I could not find. This, of course, if we could definitely prove it, would turn Lestrade's argument against himself, for who would steal a thing if he knew that he would shortly inherit it?

"Finally, having drawn every other cover and picked up no scent, I tried my luck with the housekeeper. Mrs. Lexington is her name—a little, dark, silent person, with suspicious and side-long eyes. She could tell us something if she would. I am convinced of it. But she was as close as wax. Yes, she had let Mr. McFarlane in at half past 9. She wished her hand had withered before she had done so. She had gone to bed at half past 10. Her room was at the other end of the house and she could hear nothing of what passed. Mr. McFarlane had left his hat and, to the best of her belief, his stick in the hall. She had been awakened by the alarm of fire. Her poor, dear master had certainly been murdered. Had he any enemies? Well, every man had enemies, but Mr. Oldacre kept himself very much to himself and only met people in the way of business. She had seen the buttons and was sure that they belonged to the clothes which he had worn last night. The wood pile was very dry, for it had not rained for a month. It burned like tinder, and by the time she reached the spot nothing could be seen but flames. She and all the firemen smelled the burned flesh from inside it. She knew nothing of the papers nor of Mr. Oldacre's private affairs.

"So, my dear Watson, there's my report of a failure. And yet—and yet"—he clinched his thin hands in a paroxysm of conviction—"I know it's all wrong. I feel it in my bones. There is something that has not come out, and that housekeeper knows it. There was a sort of sulky defiance in her eyes which only goes with guilty knowledge. However, there's no good talking any more about it, Watson. But unless some lucky chance comes our way I fear that the Norwood disappearance case will not figure in that chronicle of our successes which I foresee that a patient public will sooner or later have to endure."

"Surely," said I, "the man's appearance would go far with any jury."

"That is a dangerous argument, my dear Watson. You remember that terrible murderer, Bert Stevens, who wanted us to get him off in '87? Was there ever a more mild mannered, Sunday school young man?"

"It is true."

"Unless we succeed in establishing an alternative theory this man is lost. You can hardly find a flaw in the case which can now be presented against him, and all further investigation has served to strengthen it. By the way, there is one curious little point about those papers which may serve us as the starting point for an inquiry. On looking over the bank book I found that the low state of the balance was principally due to large checks which have been made out during the last year to Mr. Cornelius. I confess that I should be interested to know who this Mr. Cornelius may be with whom a retired builder has such very large transactions. Is it possible that he has had a hand in the affair? Cornelius might be a broker, but we have found no scrip to correspond with these large payments. Failing any other indication, my researches must now take the direction of an inquiry at the bank for the gentleman who has cashed these checks. But I fear, my dear fellow, that our case will end ingloriously by Lestrade hanging our client, which will certainly be a triumph for Scotland Yard."

I do not know how far Sherlock Holmes took any sleep that night, but when I came down to breakfast, his bright eyes the brighter for the dark shadows round them. The carpet round his chair was littered with cigarette ends and with the early editions of the morning papers. An open telegram lay upon the table.

"What do you think of this, Watson?" he asked, tossing it across.

It was from Norwood and ran as follows:

"Important fresh evidence to hand. McFarlane's guilt definitely established. Advise you to abandon case. LESTRADE."

"This sounds serious," said I.

"It is Lestrade's little cock-a-doodle of victory," Holmes answered, with a bitter smile. "And yet it may be premature to abandon the case. After all, important fresh evidence is a two edged thing and may possibly cut in a very different direction from that which Lestrade imagines. Take your breakfast, Watson, and we will go out together and see what we can do. I feel as if I shall need your company and your moral support today."

My friend had no breakfast himself, for it was one of his peculiarities that in his more intense moments he would permit himself no food, and I have known him to presume upon his iron strength until he has fainted from



Copyright by Collier's Weekly.

"She could tell us something if she would."

pure inanition. "At present I cannot spare energy and nerve force for digestion," he would say in answer to my medical remonstrances. I was not surprised, therefore, when this morning he left his untouched meal behind him and started with me for Norwood. A crowd of morbid sightseers were still gathered round Deep Dene House, which was just such a suburban villa as I had pictured. Within the gates Lestrade met us, his face flushed with victory, his manner grossly triumphant.

"Well, Mr. Holmes, have you proved us to be wrong yet? Have you found your tramp?" he cried.

"I have formed no conclusion whatever," my companion answered.

"But we formed ours yesterday, and now it proves to be correct, so you must acknowledge that we have been a little in front of you this time, Mr. Holmes."

"You certainly have the air of something unusual having occurred," said Lestrade.

"You don't like being beaten any more than the rest of us do," said he. "A man can't expect advances to have it his own way, can he, Dr. Watson? Step this way, if you please, gentlemen, and I think I can convince you once for all that it was John McFarlane who did this crime."

He led us through the passage and out into a dark hall beyond.

"This is where young McFarlane must have come out to get his hat after the crime was done," said he. "Now, look at this." With dramatic suddenness he struck a match and by its light exposed a stain of blood upon the whitewashed wall. As he held the match nearer I saw that it was more than a stain. It was the well marked print of a thumb.

"Look at that with your magnifying glass, Mr. Holmes."

"Yes, I am doing so."

"You are aware that no two thumb marks are alike?"

"I have heard something of the kind."

"Well, then, will you please compare that print with this wax impression of young McFarlane's right thumb taken by my orders this morning?"

As he held the waxen print close to the blood stain it did not take a magnifying glass to see that the two were undoubtedly from the same thumb. It was evident to me that our unfortunate client was lost.

"That is final," said Lestrade.

"Yes, that is final," I involuntarily echoed.

"It is final," said Holmes.

Something in his tone caught my ear, and I turned to look at him. An extraordinary change had come over his face. It was writhing with inward merriment. His two eyes were shining like stars. It seemed to me that he was making desperate efforts to restrain a convulsive attack of laughter.

"Dear me! Dear me!" he said at last. "Well, now, who would have thought it? And how deceptive appearances may be, to be sure! Such a nice young man to look at! It is a lesson to us not to trust our own judgment, is it not, Lestrade?"

"Yes, some of us are a little too much inclined to be cocksure, Mr. Holmes," said Lestrade. "The man's insolence was maddening, but we could not resist it."

"What a providential thing that this young man should press his right thumb against the wall in taking his hat from the peg! Such a very natural action, too, if you come to think of it." Holmes was outwardly calm, but his whole body gave a wriggle of suppressed excitement as he spoke. "By the way, Lestrade, who made this remarkable discovery?"

"It was the housekeeper, Mrs. Lexington, who drew the night constable's attention to it."

"Where was the night constable?"

"He remained on guard in the bedroom where the crime was committed so as to see that nothing was touched."

"But why didn't the police see this mark yesterday?"

"Well, we had no particular reason

to make a careful examination of the hall. Besides, it's not in a very prominent place, as you see."

"No, no—of course not. I suppose there is no doubt that the mark was there yesterday?"

Lestrade looked at Holmes as if he thought he was going out of his mind. I confess that I was myself surprised both at his hilarious manner and at his rather wild observation.

"I don't know whether you think that McFarlane came out of jail in the dead of night in order to strengthen the evidence against himself," said Lestrade.

"I leave it to any expert in the world whether that is not the mark of his thumb."

"It is unquestionably the mark of his thumb."

"There, that's enough," said Lestrade. "I am a practical man, Mr. Holmes, and when I have got my evidence I come to my conclusions. If you have anything to say you will find me writing my report in the sitting room."

Holmes had recovered his equanimity, though I still seemed to detect gleams of amusement in his expression.

"Dear me, this is a very sad development, Watson, is it not?" said he. "And yet there are singular points about it which hold out some hopes for our client."

"I am delighted to hear it," said I heartily. "I was afraid it was all up with him."

"I would hardly go so far as to say that, my dear Watson. The fact is that there is one really serious flaw in this evidence to which our friend attaches so much importance."

"Indeed, Holmes! What is it?"

"Only this, that I know that that mark was not there when I examined the hall yesterday. And now, Watson, let us have a little stroll round in the sunshine."

With a confused brain, but with a heart into which some warmth of hope was returning, I accompanied my friend in a walk round the garden. Holmes took each face of the house in turn and examined it with great interest. He then led the way inside and went over the whole building from basement to attic. Most of the rooms were unfurnished, but none the less Holmes inspected them all minutely. Finally, on the top corridor, which ran outside three untenanted bedrooms, he again was seized with a spasm of merriment.

"There are really some very unique features about this case, Watson," said he. "I think it is time now that we took our friend Lestrade into our confidence. He has had his little smile at our expense, and perhaps we may do as much by him if my reading of this problem proves to be correct. Yes, yes, I think I see how we should approach it."

The Scotland Yard detective was still writing in the parlor when Holmes interrupted him.

"I understood that you were writing a report of this case," said he.

"So I am."

"Don't you think it may be a little premature? I can't help thinking that your evidence is not complete."

Lestrade knew my friend too well to disregard his words. He laid down his pen and looked curiously at him.

"What do you mean, Mr. Holmes?"

"Only that there is an important witness whom you have not seen."

"Can you produce him?"

"I think I can."

"Then do so."

"I will do my best. How many constables have you?"

"There are three within call."

"Excellent!" said Holmes. "May I ask if they are all large, able-bodied men with powerful voices?"

"I have no doubt they are, though I fail to see what their voices have to do with it."

"Perhaps I can help you to see that and one or two other things as well," said Holmes. "Kindly summon your men, and I will try."

Five minutes later three policemen had assembled in the hall.

"In the out-house you will find a considerable quantity of straw," said Holmes. "I will ask you to carry in two bundles of it. I think it will be of the greatest assistance in producing the witness whom I require. Thank you very much. I believe you have some matches in your pocket, Watson. Now, Mr. Lestrade, I will ask you all to accompany me to the top landing."

As I have said, there was a broad corridor there, which ran outside three empty bedrooms. At one end of the corridor we were all marshaled by Sherlock Holmes, the constables grinning and Lestrade staring at my friend with amazement, expectation and derision chasing each other across his features. Holmes stood before us with the air of a conjurer who is performing a trick.

"Would you kindly send one of your constables for two buckets of water? Put the straw on the floor here, free from the wall on either side. Now I think that we are all ready."

Lestrade's face had begun to grow red and angry.

"I don't know whether you are playing a game with us, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," said he. "If you know anything you can surely say it without all this foolery."

"I assure you, my good Lestrade, that I have an excellent reason for

## ECZEMA

### ITCHES AND BURNS

The return of warm weather means a return of torture to Eczema sufferers. The blood is charged with burning acids and acid matter which is forced to the surface through the pores and glands, forming pustules which discharge a sticky fluid, and the itching is intense.

The doctors said I had pustular Eczema; it would break out in small white pustules, mostly on my face and hands, discharging a sticky fluid; crusts would form and drop off, leaving the skin red and inflamed. I was tormented with the itching and burning characteristic of the disease for five years, and during the time used various medicated soaps, ointments and washes, but these applications seemed to make me worse. After taking S. S. S. a short time I began to improve; the itching did not worry me so much. I continued the medicine, and soon all the ugly eruptions disappeared and my skin is now as clear as anybody's. I have not been troubled with any breaking out since.

Sometimes the disease is in the dry form, and bran-like scales form on the skin, but the cause is the same—humors in the blood. Salves, cooling washes, powders and the like can do nothing more than relieve the itching, because they do not reach the acid-laden blood, the seat of the trouble. S. S. S. cures Eczema and all skin diseases by neutralizing the acids and carrying them off through the proper channels. When S. S. S. has done this the symptoms pass away, the blood is cooled and the disease is cured permanently. Nothing acts so promptly or surely in skin diseases as S. S. S., and it at the same time acts as a tonic to the entire system. Book on Skin Diseases and any medical advice without charge.

THE SWIFT SPECIFIC CO., Atlanta, Ga.

everything that I do. You may possibly remember that you chafed me a little some hours ago when the sun seemed on your side of the hedge, so you must not grudge me a little pomp and ceremony now. Might I ask you, Watson, to open that window and then to put a match to the edge of the straw?"

I did so, and, driven by the draft, a coil of gray smoke swirled down the corridor, while the dry straw crackled and flamed.

"Now we must see if we can find this witness for you, Lestrade. Might I ask you all to join in the cry of 'Fire?'"

"Now, then—one, two, three!"

"Fire!" we all yelled.

"Thank you. I will trouble you once again."

"Fire!"

"Just once more, gentlemen, and all together."

"Fire!" The shout must have rung over Norwood.

It had hardly died away when an amazing thing happened. A door suddenly flew open out of what appeared to be solid wall at the end of the corridor and a little wizened man darted out of it like a rabbit out of its burrow.

"Capital!" said Holmes calmly. "Watson, a bucket of water over the straw. That will do! Lestrade, allow me to present you with your principal missing witness, Mr. Jonas Oldacre."

The detective stared at the newcomer with blank amazement. The latter was blinking in the bright light of the corridor and peering at us and at the smoldering fire. It was an odious face—crafty, vicious, malignant, with shifty, light gray eyes and white lashes.

"What's this, then?" said Lestrade at last. "What have you been doing all this time, eh?"

Oldacre gave an uneasy laugh, shrinking back from the furious red face of the angry detective.

"I have done no harm."

"No harm? You have done your best to get an innocent man hanged. If it wasn't for this gentleman here I am not sure that you would not have succeeded."

The wretched creature began to whimper.

"I am sure, sir, it was only my practical joke."

"Oh, a joke, was it? You won't find the laugh on your side, I promise you. Take him down and keep him in the sitting room until I come, Mr. Holmes," he continued when they had gone, "I could not speak before the constables, but I don't mind saying in the presence of Dr. Watson that this is the brightest thing that you have done yet, though it is a mystery to me how you did it. You have saved an innocent man's life, and you have prevented a very grave scandal, which would have ruined my reputation in the force."

Holmes smiled and clapped Lestrade upon the shoulder.

"Instead of being ruined, my good sir, you will find that your reputation has been enormously enhanced. Just make a few alterations in that report which you were writing and they will understand how hard it is to throw dust in the eyes of Inspector Lestrade."

"And you don't want your name to appear?"

"Not at all. The work is its own reward. Perhaps I shall get the credit also at some distant day, when I permit my zealous historian to lay out his foolscap once more—eh, Watson? Well, now, let us see where this rat has been lurking."

A latt and plaster partition had been run across the passage six feet from the wall, with a door cunningly concealed in it. It was lit within by slits under the eaves. A few articles of furniture and a supply of food and water were within, together with a number of books and papers.

"There's the advantage of being a builder," said Holmes as we came out. "He was able to fix up his own little hiding place without any confederate, save, of course, that precious housekeeper of his, whom I should lose no time in adding to your bag, Lestrade."

"I'll take your advice. But how did you know of this place, Mr. Holmes?"

"I made up my mind that the fellow was in hiding in the house. When I paced one corridor and found it six feet shorter than the corresponding one below it was pretty clear where he was. I thought he had not the nerve to lie quiet before an alarm of fire. We could, of course, have gone in and taken him, but it amused me to make him reveal himself. Besides, I owed you a little mystification, Lestrade, for your chaff in the morning."

"Well, sir, you certainly got equal with me on that. But how in the world did you know that he was in the house at all?"

"The thumb mark, Lestrade. You said it was final, and so it was in a very different sense. I knew it had not been there the day before. I pay a good deal of attention to matters of detail, as you may have observed, and I had examined the hall and was sure that the wall was clear. Therefore it had been put on during the night."

"But how?"

"Very simply. When those packets were sealed up Jonas Oldacre got McFarlane to secure one of the sentries by putting his thumb upon the soft wax. It would be done so quickly and so naturally that I dare say the young man himself has no recollection of it. Very likely it just so happened, and Oldacre had himself no notion of the use he would put it to. Brooding over the case in that den of his, it suddenly struck him what absolutely damning evidence he could make against McFarlane by using that thumb mark. It was the simplest thing in the world for him to take a wax impression from the seal, to moisten it in as much blood as he could get from a pin prick and to put the mark upon the wall during the night either with his own hand or with that of his housekeeper. If you examine among those documents which he took with him into his retreat I will lay you a wager that you find the seal with the thumb mark upon it."

"Wonderful!" said Lestrade. "Wonderful! It's all as clear as crystal as you put it. But what is the object of this deep deception, Mr. Holmes?"

It was amusing to me to see how the detective's overbearing manner had changed suddenly to that of a child asking questions of its teacher.

"Well, I don't think that is very hard to explain. A very deep, malicious, vindictive person is the gentleman who is now waiting us downstairs. You know that he was once refused by McFarlane's mother? You don't! I told you that you should go to Blackheath first and Norwood afterward. Well, this injury, as he would consider it, has rankled in his wicked, scheming brain, and all his life he has longed for vengeance, but never seen his chance. During the last year or two things have gone against him—secret speculation, I think—and he finds himself in a bad way. He determines to swindle his creditors, and for this purpose he pays large checks to a certain Mr. Cornelius, who is, I imagine, himself under another name. I have not traced these checks yet, but I have no doubt that they were banked under that name at some provincial town, where Oldacre from time to time led a double existence. He intended to change his name altogether, draw his money and vanish, starting life again elsewhere."

"Well, that's likely enough."

"It would strike him that in disappearing he might throw all pursuit off his track and at the same time have an ample and crushing revenge upon his old sweetheart if he could give the impression that he had been murdered by her only child. It was a masterpiece of villainy, and he carried it out like a master. The idea of the will, which would give an obvious motive for the crime, the secret visit unknown to his own parents, the retention of the stick, the blood and the animal remains and buttons in the wood pile—all were admirable. It was a net from which it seemed to me, a few hours ago, that there was no possible escape. But he had not that supreme gift of the artist, the knowledge of when to stop. He wished to improve that which was already perfect—to draw the rope tighter yet round the neck of his unfortunate victim—and so he ruined all. Let us descend, Lestrade. There are just one or two questions that I would ask him."

The malignant creature was seated in his own parlor with a policeman upon each side of him.

"It was a joke, my good sir—a practical joke, nothing more," he whined incessantly. "I assure you, sir, that I simply concealed myself in order to see the effect of my disappearance, and I am sure that you would not be so unjust as to imagine that I would have allowed any harm to befall poor young Mr. McFarlane."

"That's for a jury to decide," said Lestrade. "Anyhow, we shall have you on a charge of conspiracy, if not for attempted murder."

"And you'll probably find that your creditors will be opposing the banking account of Mr. Cornelius," said Holmes.

The little man started and turned his malignant eyes upon my friend.

"I have to thank you for a good deal," said he. "Perhaps I'll pay my debt some day."

Holmes smiled indulgently.

"I fancy that for some few years you will find your time very fully occupied," said he. "By the way, what was it you put into the wood pile besides your old trousers? A dead dog, or rabbits, or what? You won't tell? Dear me, how very unkind of you! Well, I dare say that a couple of rabbits would account both for the blood and for the charred ashes. If ever you write an account, Watson, you can make rabbits serve your turn."

THE CITY CARRIAGE SHOPS, 113 AND 115 W. ROMANA, THE ONLY PLACE OF ITS KIND IN CITY WHICH IS NOW IN OPERATION. J. J. HILLIARD, PROP. HORSESHOEING RELIABLY DONE.

## Woman's Kidney Troubles

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is Especially Successful in Curing This Fatal Disease.



Mrs. J.W. Lang and Mrs. S. Frake

Of all the diseases known, with which women are afflicted, kidney disease is the most fatal. In fact, unless early and correct treatment is applied, the weary patient seldom survives.

Being fully aware of this, Mrs. Pinkham early in her career, gave exhaustive study to the subject, and in producing her great remedy for women's ills—Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound—was careful to see that it contained the correct combination of herbs which was sure to control that fatal disease, woman's kidney troubles. The Vegetable Compound acts in harmony with the laws that govern the entire female system, and while there are many so-called remedies for kidney troubles, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is the only one especially prepared for women, and thousands have been cured of serious kidney derangements by it. Derangements of the feminine organs quickly affect the kidneys, and when a woman has such symptoms as pain or weight in the loins, backache, bearing down pains, urine too frequent, scanty or high colored, profuse sweating or burning, or deposits like brick dust in it; unusual thirst, swelling of hands and feet, swelling under the eyes or sharp pains in the back running down the inside of her groin, she may be sure her kidneys are affected and should lose no time in combating the disease with Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, the woman's remedy for woman's ills.

The following letters show how marvelously successful it is.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound; a Woman's Remedy for Woman's Ills.

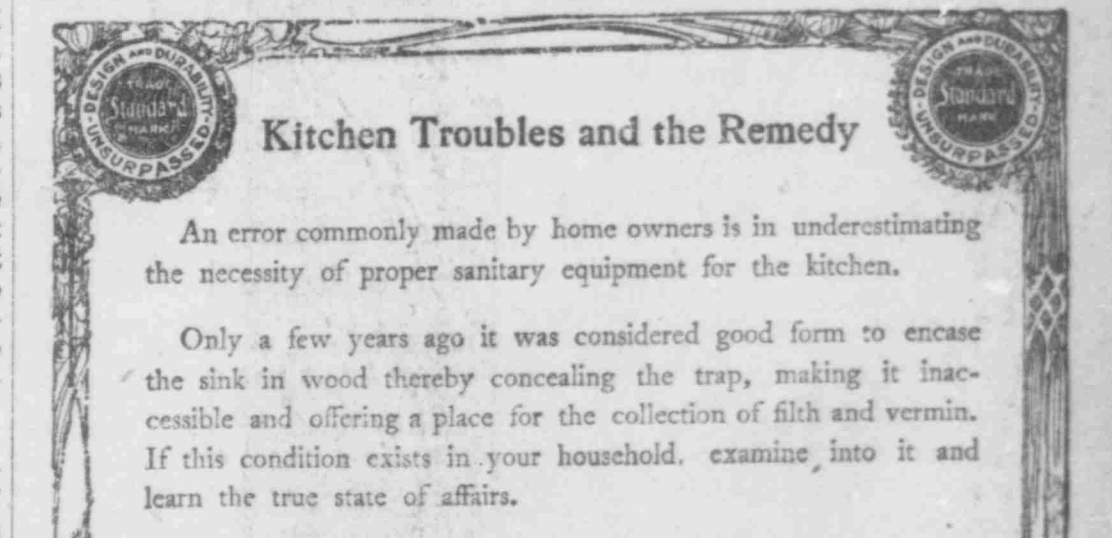
Mrs. Samuel Frake, of Prospect Plains, N. J., writes: "Dear Mrs. Pinkham—I cannot thank you enough for what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me. When I first wrote to you I had suffered for years with what the doctor called kidney trouble and congestion of the womb. My back ached dreadfully all the time, and I suffered so with that bearing-down feeling I could hardly walk across the room. I did not get any better, so decided to stop doctoring with my physician and take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and I am thankful to say it has entirely cured me. I do all my own work, have no more backache and all the bad symptoms have disappeared. I cannot praise your medicine enough, and would advise all women suffering with kidney trouble to try it."

Mrs. J. W. Lang, of 626 Third Avenue, New York, writes: "Dear Mrs. Pinkham—I have been a great sufferer with kidney trouble. My back ached all the time and I was discouraged. I heard that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound would cure kidney disease, and I began to take it; and it has cured me when everything else had failed. I have recommended it to lots of people and they all praise it very highly."

Mrs. Pinkham's Standing Invitation. Women suffering from kidney trouble, or any form of female weakness are invited to promptly communicate with Mrs. Pinkham, at Lynn, Mass. Out of the great volume of experience which she has to draw from, it is more than likely she has the very knowledge that will help your case. Her advice is free and always helpful.

Kitchen Troubles and the Remedy. An error commonly made by home owners is in underestimating the necessity of proper sanitary equipment for the kitchen.

Only a few years ago it was considered good form to encase the sink in wood thereby concealing the trap, making it inaccessible and offering a place for the collection of filth and vermin. If this condition exists in your household, examine into it and learn the true state of affairs.



Do not lose sight of the fact that your food is prepared in the kitchen and the utensils in which it is prepared depend on the sanitary arrangements for cleanliness, therefore safeguard against contamination of either food or utensils.

The most certain way to do this is to employ us to install a snowy white, spotlessly clean, "Standard" Porcelain Enamelled Kitchen Sink. You will find it a remedy for kitchen troubles.

WICKE & CO. Pensacola, Fla.

CONSOLIDATED GROCERY CO. MAIN OFFICE: Jacksonville, Florida. BRANCHES: Savannah, Tampa, Pensacola.

PAID CAPITAL, \$5000.00

The Consolidated Grocery Company is successor to the C. B. Robers Company, of Jacksonville; the Florida Grocery Company, of Jacksonville; the grocery branch of the Florida Naval Stores Company, of Jacksonville; the grocery branch of the Gulf Naval Stores Company, of Tampa; the grocery branch of the Gulf Naval Stores Company, of Pensacola; the grocery branch of the West Coast Naval Stores Company, of Pensacola; the grocery branch of the Southern Naval Stores Company, of Savannah.

Will handle everything in Heavy and Light Groceries, Grain Domestic and Imported Groceries, Turpentine, Tools, etc. State Agents for the White Hickory Turpentine Wagons.

C. M. COVINGTON MANAGER PENSACOLA BRANCH.

Order Your ICE, COAL and WOOD from the Consumers' Ice and Fuel Company.

Office—Corner Chase and Tarragona. Phone 259.